

EXPLORING WATER SENSES

A consumer guide to
common water questions



● APPEARANCE



● SMELL



● TASTE



● TOUCH



High-Quality Water that Appeals to the

SENSES

From the aquifer to your home faucet, delivering the highest quality water to customers is Tucson Water's priority. Our drinking water is safe, complying with all federal, state and regional regulations.

Tucson Water professionals monitor water for taste, pressure, odor and appearance-related issues – though federal regulations don't require it.

Each of us wants drinking water that looks, smells and tastes good. That's why Tucson Water wants to assist you in identifying possible issues and how you can troubleshoot them at home.



APPEARANCE



SMELL



TASTE



TOUCH



Welcome to the

CUSTOMER ZONE

While Tucson Water is responsible for all the infrastructure and water quality across a 375-square mile service area, you are responsible for water quality in the Customer Zone.

The Customer Zone is from the water meter to the tap and includes the plumbing, pipes, swamp cooler, landscaping systems, hot water heater, gray water systems, home treatment systems, water-related appliances and other water systems.

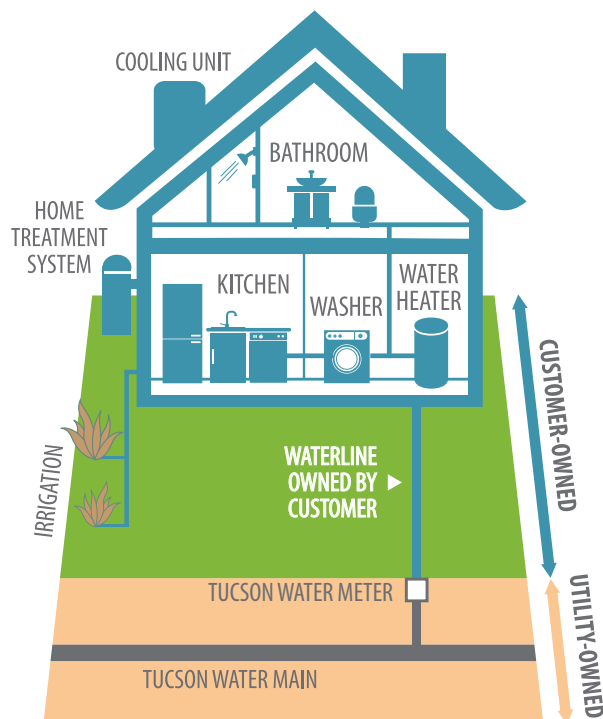


3 Customer Zone factors

that can affect your drinking water's smell, pressure, taste, and appearance:

- 1 Type, age and condition of pipes and plumbing
- 2 Maintenance and age of home water treatment systems
- 3 How often you turn on taps and use tap water

CUSTOMER ZONE



Two-Step Troubleshooting

1. Use this brochure to zero in on the source of the problem and troubleshoot it at home.
2. If the problem persists, contact the Water Quality Customer Support Team at (520) 791-5945 or CustomerSupportUnit@tucsonaz.gov



APPEARANCE

● Cloudy/milky water:

"Why is my water cloudy?" is one of the most-often asked questions by customers. Water with a cloudy or milky white appearance may be caused by millions of tiny dissolving air bubbles. Dissolved air is harmless and will not hurt you or damage plumbing or appliances.

TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS

Fill a clean, clear glass or jar with water and let it stand for a few minutes. As air escapes, the water will clear from the bottom of the glass, upward. A faucet aerator that requires cleaning or replacing is often the source of milky water. Replace the aerator or remove it, soak it in vinegar and then put it back on.



● **Discolored water or dirty looking water** can be related to older, galvanized pipes and plumbing in the Customer Zone or to recent activity in your neighborhood, such as construction, repairing breaks, or flushing fire hydrants. (Black particles in toilet water can indicate that a toilet flapper needs to be replaced.)



1



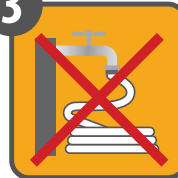
Grab a white bucket

2



Go to the outside faucet closest to your water meter or to the main faucet, where water enters the house

3



Remove a hose if attached to the faucet

4



Run water from the spigot into the bucket until the bucket is full. Repeat 2 or 3 times.

5

If bucket water is clear – the issue is most likely in the Customer Zone. Contact a plumber to inspect plumbing and pipes.

If the bucket water has color – Immediately call Tucson Water at (520) 791-5945 or (520) 791-4133.



SMELL



● **Rotten egg, musty or sewer smell** is most commonly caused by bacteria growing in a sink drain or water heater. These bacteria may be flourishing because water faucets haven't been turned on, if hot water hasn't been used or has been turned off for a while, or if the water heater thermostat is set too low. Sometimes this smell is most noticeable during the hot summer months.

● **Swimming pool smell and taste:** Tap water with a chlorine-like taste and smell may be caused by an elevated level of chlorine in the water. Chlorine is the world's number one water disinfectant and while Tucson Water adheres to the USEPA's concentration guidelines, some people are sensitive to even average chlorine levels.

TROUBLESHOOTING



Go to the sink where you believe the odor originates. Fill a clean glass with **cold** water, step away from the sink and swirl and smell the water. If there is no odor, then the origin may possibly be the sink's drain or garbage disposal. Here are some tips to eliminate the smell:

- 1) Mix a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water and a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup bleach. (**Warning: if you have a septic tank, never use bleach; mix $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup baking soda.**) Pour down the drain, wait 20 minutes, and flush.
- 2) Still have an odor? Take out the sink trap, remove any solids and replace.

Contact the Water Quality Customer Support Team at (520) 791-5945 or (520) 791-4133 should smell and odor issues persist.



You can easily get rid of water that smells and tastes like a swimming pool, medicine, or metallic: place an open container of drinking water into the refrigerator. Overnight, the chlorine taste will naturally disappear.

You can also contact the Water Quality Customer Support Team and we will conduct a field test.



TASTE



There are several factors that can influence how drinking water tastes: Smell and taste are closely linked. The geology and the naturally occurring minerals and salts found in the source water can affect taste. (All drinking water – even bottled water – may be expected to contain a certain amount of salts and minerals.) Even a malfunctioning home treatment system can affect tap water taste.

- **When drinking water tastes earthy or like dirt**, it may be related to high levels of certain minerals.

- **A medicinal or chemical taste** can be related to chlorine.



Place an open container of drinking water into the refrigerator. Overnight, the chlorine taste will naturally disappear.

TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS

1. *If you have a home water treatment or softening system, be sure it's up to date on maintenance.*
2. *Clean or replace faucet aerator and filters. Flakes can accumulate on screens, causing taste issues.*
3. *Contact the Water Quality Customer Support Team at (520) 791-5945.*



TOUCH

Water pressure can vary greatly from one area of the water system to another – even from house to house. These factors can impact your home's water pressure:

- Elevation and gravity of your home and the water distribution system
- The size of nearby water mains
- Fire protection requirements
- A leak inside the Customer Zone
- Clogged appliances or a home water treatment system that needs maintenance
- A malfunctioning shut off valve to the house
- A pressure regulating valve (PRV) that needs to be replaced or adjusted



For water pressure concerns, immediately contact the Water Quality Customer Support Team at (520) 791-5945 or (520) 791-4133.



- **Tucson Water receives more customer calls about low water pressure** than high. A couple of questions to ask include: Are pressure issues throughout the house or in one spot only? Have you checked the water meter to test for a Customer Zone leak? Are any of your neighbors experiencing the same issue?



Using your water meter to detect leaks

Low water pressure? Your water meter can help you determine inconspicuous leaks that can cause low water pressure in the Customer Zone.

1. Turn off all faucets and water-consuming devices, including evaporative coolers, irrigation systems, pool systems, home water treatment system and refrigerator ice-makers.
2. Check the needle's position on the water meter dial and note the time.
3. After 15-30 minutes, check the needle's position. If it has changed, you may have a leak. Note that some meters have a dial – a triangle – on the face. If the triangle is moving with all water off, then there may be water flow or a leak.

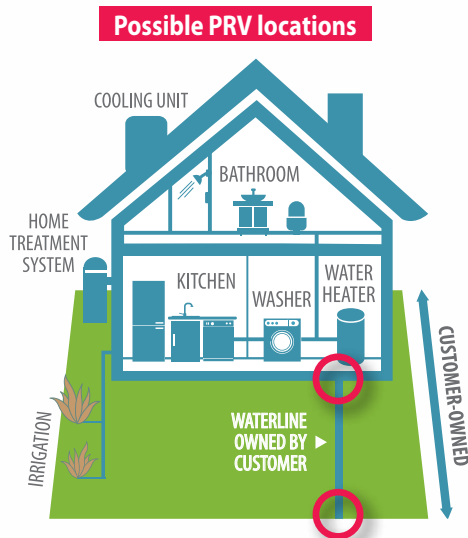
Contact the Water Quality Customer Support Team at (520) 791-5945 or (520) 791-4133.



TOUCH

● Pressure Regulating Valve (PRV) Basics

A home PRV regulates the incoming water pressure to a level compatible with your home plumbing and appliances. A PRV is common in many homes and has been required by Pima County on all newly constructed homes since 2005.



*



If you suspect you have water pressure problems...

1. **Locate your PRV:** A PRV is generally located after the water meter on the Customer Zone side **or** at the base of the incoming water line as it enters your home, usually below the outdoor hose bib and the house shut-off valve. You may have to hunt to locate the PRV!
2. **Read your water pressure:** To check home water pressure you'll need a water pressure gauge. (Gauges are available at many hardware stores for less than \$10.) Attach the gauge to the main spigot or the main faucet where the water enters the house. Turn on the spigot to read the water pressure.

* Image courtesy of Robert Murch, Acton Water District



Water **Reliability**



(520) 791-5945
(520) 791-2639 TDD



CustomerSupportUnit@tucsonaz.gov



youtube.com/tucsonwater



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*Esta información está disponible en español.
Por favor llame al (520) 791-4331.*

